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"New Joy," young people from Newton, Massachusetts will sing at the Second National Convention of the Presbyterian Lay Committee. Their minister from the Newton Presbyterian Church has radiated through television and appearances in many communities.

The Presbyterian Layman, Vol. 7, No 2 (March 1974) p.1. Jesus Christ—The Hope of the World

Excerpts of an address by Dr. Moffett delivered at the tenth triennial Inter-Varsity Missionary Convention at Urbana, Ill., in late December.

In the face of all the good reasons for losing hope, how realistic are my reasons for holding on to hope? It's not enough to stand up and shout, "Jesus Christ is the hope of the world." It is not enough for Christians to peer out hopefully at this incredibly bad world through our happy little stained glass church windows and delude ourselves into thinking that our pretty colors will make the world all right. If Jesus Christ is going to be the hope of the world, we have got to begin with the world as it really is, and hope as it really is. Slogans are not enough. The words have got to focus on things believably real, or we remain as self-deluded as a Red Guard in China with his communist chants and his Chairman Mao.

So, to avoid dreams and wishful thinking, let us stay as close as possible to things as they are and let me make three simple observations about Christian hope:

1. The World As It Is: Hopeless.

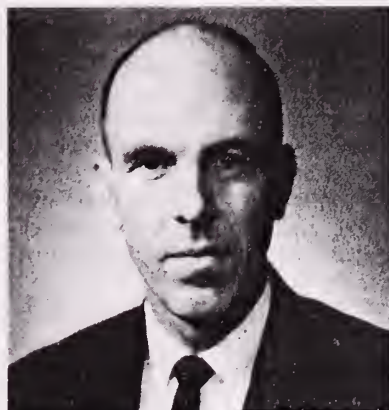
The physical facts alone are enough to terrify the imagination. The human race is running out of heat, out of food, out of water — out of just about everything, in fact, but people. The oil crisis is only the latest, and far from the most serious, in a whole series of shocks that have tumbled man out of all his early 20th century dreams of inevitable progress. A man who works for one of the largest oil companies in the world told me that even if the earth were a hollow globe and was completely filled with oil—which of course it isn't—even then, at the present rate of increasing consumption we would be completely out of oil in less than

70 years, that is, by the year 2040.

Even before that, by 1990, they say, the United States may be facing a more alarming shortage. We may run out of food. It seems impossible, I know. America has been the wonder of the world, feeding itself with more than enough to eat yet using only about 7% of its population in agricultural production. Most of the world puts 50% of its people on the land, and still can't feed the rest. But now even America may be coming to the end of the food boom. Without intensive food research, says Dr. Parks, president of Iowa State, in twenty years America too will be hungry, just like all the rest of the world. And the worst shortage of all may still be yet to come. Water. The world's water table, its reserves of fresh water are steadily and dangerously draining away. Deserts are eating again into the green earth. In North Africa alone, along the Sahara, millions may die in 1974.

Let me jolt you with one last deadly statistic. John Hannah, outgoing administrator of our government's Agency for International Development (AID), says that one half of all the children born into the world this year will never live to see their sixth birthday.

Now strangely enough, considering the fact that we are talking about Christian hope, the Bible does not directly dispel such pessimism. It holds out no great hope for this earth as such. "The earth shall perish," says the Old Testament (Ps. 102:25). It will be



Samuel H. Moffett

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very significant strides toward solving the problem of With cash in hand of over \$1,300,000 by February nearly tripled the highest figure ever realized in Christmas Offering.

Several factors can be responsible, the most ob

"burned up," adds the New (II Pet. 3:10).

Well, if the world is as hopeless as it looks, and if on top of that, the Bible says it is doomed, what do we mean when we say, "Jesus Christ is the hope of the world." To understand that, we must ask what Christians mean by hope, and how it is connected with Jesus Christ.

2. The World With Christ: Hope With a Future

When people tell me that my Christian hope is unrealistic, I tell them that the trouble is not with my hope, but with their reality. Their reality is too small. They are so petrified by the present that they forget the past and the future. They are so busy looking at the world that they never look up to see God. Of course, in that kind of a world there is no hope. But one of the most important lessons in the whole Bible is that hope is not confined to any one point in space or time. It is tied to a person, Jesus Christ, and it is forever. "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

Things do look rather bad these days. But they've been worse. If you have given up hope because today is so bad, look back about 1900 years. The darkest day the world has ever known was not Watergate, or My Lai or Hiroshima. It was the day Gentiles and Jews took the hope of the world, Jesus Christ, and stripped him and beat him and killed him on a cross. The dead shuddered and hell broke loose, and for one agonizing instant, a moment never to be repeated, the whole human race was utterly and completely, God-forsakenly lost. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" came a cry from the cross, from Christ, the second Adam.

But God took that most hopeless of all days and made it the hinge of history, not its end. He is always doing the happily unexpected. Unlike human history, which always seems to turn out bad just when it begins to look good, God's salvation history is at its best when things look worst. Man's curse is that without God he takes each new shining discovered hope

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Jesus Christ—The Hope of the World

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and turns it into an engine of his own destruction. Man's *hope* lies in the fact that God does just the opposite.

Look at the depressing story of man's hopes. It reads like a bad joke, one of those "That's good, no that's bad" jokes. Centuries ago the Chinese discovered a new source of energy, gunpowder. That's good. No, that's bad. Gunpowder kills people. Well, a few hundred years later the Americans discovered a new source of energy, oil. That's good. Oil doesn't kill people. No, that's bad. It pollutes, it kills the world, and besides, we're running out of it. Well, here's good news anyway: we now have an even better source of energy, nuclear fission. No, even that is bad. It kills people faster than gunpowder, and pollutes more lethally than oil.

Now, there is nothing wrong, of course, with man's discoveries. The more the better. And there is nothing wrong with each new hope as such, except that this kind of hope is anchored to man's wisdom and powers, and not to God's, and man without God takes what is good and uses it to destroy. God takes the worst, and uses it to save. He took death, the ultimate instrument of man's destruction, and conquered it, defused it. He raised Jesus Christ from the dead and the disciples saw him, and even doubting Thomas touched him and at last believed. He who was dead lives, and that makes Jesus Christ the hope of the world. He gives us a future to live for, not just a present to die in.

The real trouble with the world is not that it is running out of physical resources, but that it is running out of hope. And it is running out of hope because it puts its hope in the wrong thing, in physical resources, for example, which is not where hope belongs.

By contrast, too much of our part of the world has given up hope and seems all too ready to die. Part of the reason, I think, is that the

most popular philosophy of our time takes away the future, takes away hope, and thereby takes away the human will to live. "Only the now is real," says the secular existentialist.

I prefer the radical realism of the Christian faith. It doesn't deny the present. It faces it. It faces all the despairing realities of the now with hope because it sees them in the balancing perspective of the equally true realities of the past and the future. Hope begins with what God did that day on Calvary 1900 years ago, and it never ends. Hope is eternal. Hope is life forever for them that believe. Hope is the promise that He will come again. However the world may end — and let's not pretend to know more about that than the Bible unambiguously teaches — it ends with Christ's victory *for* man, and not with man's annihilation *of* man. It ends with hope, and that is not an end.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

3. The World and Christ and You: Hope With a Mission.

But I must make one final, important point. When some Christians sing that great hymn, the 110th Psalm, they manage to miss one of the key points about Christian hope, namely, that hope carries with it a mission. It's not just a bomb shelter, a safe and future home. It is all that, yes, but more. If as Christians all we have to say is, "There's no hope for the world, and the sooner you are out of it the better. So die and receive the hope laid up for you in heaven" — if that is our gospel, it deserves all the scorn that the communists heap upon it with their caricature, "Pie in the sky by-and-by."

Jesus is the hope of the world not simply because he calls us to future glory. He is the hope of the

world because he also laid aside his glory to share the hungers of the hungry and feed them, to suffer the weaknesses of the sick and heal them, to take on himself the injustices of the oppressed and overcome them. He asked his disciples to do the same.

In this day of expanding populations and increasingly serious shortages, it is time for Christians to recognize once and for all that any Christian witness which has nothing to say about the consuming hungers of two-thirds of the world's peoples is a witness neither inspired by Christ who fed the multitudes, nor one that is calculated to win the hearts of the multitudes he died to save. It is not really a Christian witness at all, and if it has no relevance to the felt needs of the world's peoples, it will be a witness borne in vain. When people are starving, they look for bread, not for preaching. Don't take the meat and the wheat out of the Christian hope.

But let's not distort the gospel the other way, either. That church in Seoul calls itself the Younngak church, which in Korean, means the Church of Everlasting Joy. It does not call itself the Church of Full Employment. Antioch was a model for mission and a center of hope not for its bread line and its used clothes, but for Paul and his good news, good news which in the final analysis centers around the resurrection victory of Jesus Christ. Our hope is the hope of salvation.

When Christ bids us give water to the thirsty, note that he adds, give it "in my name," for there is a deeper hunger than the physical, and a deeper thirst than the thirst for water, a hunger and a thirst that only Christ can satisfy. The deepest call to mission is still the call to evangelize, to spread the good news of salvation in Christ....

Don't let anyone tell you that the day of the missionary is over. It may be just beginning. Whole new armies of third world missionaries, Christians from Asia and Africa and Latin America, are rising to join in the work.

Doors are opening all over, even for you Westerners. Not often as pioneers, now, but as partners. There are places you can go and tasks you can do which an Asian or African cannot. Just as there are places and tasks for them which you cannot fill. But together you can reach the world. The heralds of hope in this kind of a world will be the missionaries.

David Livingstone said, "Without Christ, not one step. With Him, anywhere!" That's what the hope of the world, Jesus Christ, should mean to you.



GETTING THE MESSAGE: Presbyterian Theology. The eight-foot map in the miniature replica of world to Korea, who pin-up panel describes from the Arcadia of without adequate help, light, mounted on a. The quotation on the never been able to Associate Pastor R Committee).

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A Special Communication To Presbyterian Pastors

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February 26, 1974

Dear Friends:

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